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APPENDIX IV

NEIGHBORHOODS AND NEIGHBORLY RELATIONS IN A BULGARIAN VILLAGE*

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During my first three years in Bulgaria, 1929-1932, I became generally acquainted with its rural life. When I returned to Bulgaria in 1934 for another three-year period I chose for special study one village, Dragalevtsy by name, whose 1,669 inhabitants live in houses clustered near the foot of Mount Vitosha four miles from the outskirts of Sofia. I visited the village on frequent occasions and lived there for weeks at a time. Although my investigations led me to consider many things such as the basic institutions, the formal and informal groupings, customs and folklore, along with the operation of the social processes, social control, and social change, one of the most difficult of the social phenomena for me, an outsider, to understand was the *mahala*, or neighborhood.

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THE MAHALA. Dragalevtsy, like the majority of European agricultural villages, is a compact settlement of farmers whose land lies around the village in strips, numbering approximately 16 per Dragalevtsy farmer. The village is at least four centuries old and has grown but slowly during that time. Until three or four generations ago all life was organized around the patriarchal *zadruga*,[1] or joint-family. The members of such a family owned everything in common and worked in harmony under the administrator or *domakin*, the acknowledged head of the *zadruga*. Although their dwellings were crude and overcrowded each *zadruga* needed a large plot of land around the houses for the flocks of sheep and other animals kept at home during the winter months. With the liberation of Bulgaria from Turkey in 1878 forces were let loose which hastened the break-up of the joint-family system.[2] Brothers moved away from the paternal home into dwellings of their own, these usually being

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[1] Ivan Evstatiev Geshov, *Zadrugite Vv Zapadna Bulgaria*, Per. Spisanie, God. V. Kn. xix i xx, str. 426, Stredets, 1886.

St. L. Kostov and E. Peteva, *Selski Bit i Izkustvo Vv Sofisko*, Sofia, 1935, str. 58.

[2] Some of the factors contributing to this break-up: (a) individualization following Bulgaria's liberation in 1878 and the spread of popular education; (b) fashion of small, individual families in the West; (c) disagreement between the wives of brothers living together under the same roof; (d) unwillingness of men working outside the *zadruga*, either as laborers or professional men, to hand over their whole earnings to the common treasury; (e) woman's newly-acquired right of inheritance.

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128 4. ORGANIZATION AND SYNTHESIS OF DATA: Before starting the study I had already delimited the field and had made a tentative outline for each proposed chapter. This was possible because of a previous three-year acquaintance with Bulgarian villages. The original plan was altered to the extent of including an additional chapter, combining others and some shifting of material. The study of the data collected led to definite conclusions in connection with every chapter, although no attempt was made to generalize regarding Bulgarian villages as a whole from the study of a single unit.

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114 The above statement about methodology was written ten years ago and is the basis upon which the research techniques used in this study must be evaluated. Within the past ten years a number of significant refinements in social research have been developed, but these did not appear in time to be applied to the Dragalevtsy study, which was one of the very few comprehensive sociological studies of village life under way in the 1930's. World War II postponed the publication arrangements already agreed upon, but in doing so gave an opportunity for the concluding chapters on social change. The information for these chapters was collected from numerous interviews in Dragalevtsy and in Sofia during November and December, 1945, a period which I spent in Bulgaria in connection with my official duties as Agricultural Attache, with headquarters at the American Embassy, Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

113 Since most of the publications used in the preparation of this book were in Bulgarian and are also relatively inaccessible to the American reader, no bibliography is included here. Anyone wishing to read more widely on Bulgaria or the Balkans in general is referred to the excellent bibliographies prepared by the Library of Congress in Washington. See especially THE BALKANS: Part I. General and Part III. Bulgaria, both sections published in 1943.

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appreciating the spirit of their history and without getting down to the meaning of Bulgaria's geographical and political situation. There is a need of deeper comprehension of the present day problems of the nations. Casual evaluations in common phrases like „the Roses of Bulgaria," „the Serenades of Italy or „the Bullfights of Spain" should give room to a more solid and comprehensive acquaintance with the actual value attributed to nations.

4. Bulgaria should be Discovered again for the World. It may seem strange, but we feel that Bulgaria should be discovered again for Europe. A German professor wrote a book[1]) in 1942, which was widely spread in Bulgaria and in which we read the following statement about our country: „In the North the soil is poor, but south of the Balkan range are grown rice, cotton, sugar cane, tobacco and many roses for the production and distribution of attar of roses; coal, gold, salt, petrol, silver, iron are found in sufficient quantities for exploitation, but not one of them has been consistently made use of..." The granary of Bulgaria, our Danube plane, with its fields of wheat, corn, barley, oats, rape seed, sugar beets, vineyards etc., this, mind you, is the poor soil of Bulgaria! Gold, petrol, silver in sufficient quantities for exploitation, this certainly must be a rich country! And, above all, many roses and quantities of attar of roses! About the history of the Bulgarian nation this author says the following: „The country south of Rumania beyond the Danube is inhabited by Bulgarians, originally a Turkish people, who came to those lands around the year 680 and spread and mixed with the Slavic settlers there. In 900 they became a great power in the whole Balkan Peninsula... in 1000 they were defeated by the Byzantine emperors. They obtained their liberty in 1200 and in 1400 fell under Turkish dominion which weighed heavily on them for a long time. Their national consciouseness reappeared as late as the 19th century, when they were already divided as Bulgarians and Turks and were able to regain with Russian help their national independence in 1878...".

The well-known four volume Lexicon of Brockhaus gives

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[1]) Prof. Otto Geissler, Die Länder und Völker der Erde, ein historisch-geographischer Abriss; Leipzig, 1942.

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114 this information about the Bulgarians: „.... The Western Bulgarians are divided in generic groups of Shopi, Rouptsi, Marvatsi, Barzatsi, Miatsi, Ketskari, Ouloufi, Poulivakovtsi and Kekovtsi... They live in mud huts in one or two storeyed houses made of mud, and in villages. They are mostly farmers and bee-masters...“ These are 6 lines out of a total of 24 lines of information given in the Lexicon.

So many authors would see a fly and miss an elephant. They would see roses in the field of hardships, and would tell the world of non-existing Rouptsi, Ketskari, Kekovtsi and other tribes, but would overlook the present development of new Bulgaria and as to the old one, they would hardly betray an inkling of understanding. This negligent attitude towards the human element is the differential of a nefarious policy which has caused the world frightful misfortunes.

On the other hand, we have before us an American text book[1]), „Our World To-day“, which in 2200 words gives a true and adequate picture of our small country. It is written with a sympathetic understanding which any interested reader would like to find in a short treatise on other countries, great or small. We are told of roses and of attar of roses in this book, but these features of the picture are retouched with grace and refinement. The practical understanding of a superior race emphasizes rather the features of gardening, tobacco planting, sugar-beet cultivation, grapes, the wheat fields of Danube Bulgaria etc. It tells no fairy tales of gold, silver, petrol and sugar cane in Bulgaria. These distant authors seem to know that such miracles do not occur in our country and that the country is not only „the land of Roses“. They mark with simple words our cultural progress, our budding and, in some respects, advanced industry, our sugar factories and good roads, water power, village and national life, our Danube River navigation etc.

I. A Glance in the past

101 131 **5. Geographic Features.** Bulgaria occupies a central position in the Balkan Peninsula (Fig. 1). The location of her capital is particularly characteristic. Bulgaria is a

[1]) Stull and Hatch, Our World To-day, a text book in the New Geography; New York, Allyn and Bacon, 1939.